

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 EUR-12 /082 W

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FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5039

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 2086

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, JM

SUBJECT: JAMAICAN POLITICAL SITUATION - VIEWS OF A MODERATE
GOJ MINISTER

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 1999

1. MINISTER OF EDUCATION ERIC BELL DURING LUNCHEON CONVERSA-
TION APRIL 29 VOLUNTEERED ADDITIONAL CONFIRMATION TO CHARGE OF THE
EVOLUTION OF THE JAMAICAN POLITICAL SCENE AND INTERPRETATIONS
THEREOF SET OUT IN REFTEL. HE NONETHELESS REMAINS DEEPLY
WORRIED ABOUT FUTURE SINCE THE POPULATION "NON EXPECTS
MIRACLES" WHEREAS THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE ECONOMY WILL
CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. HE SAID
THAT THE RADICALS WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND IN THE PNP VIEW
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AS ONLY A TACTICAL DEFEAT AND NOW LOOK
FORWARD TO ANOTHER CONFRONTATION IN SEPTEMBER OR OCTOBER.
D.K. DUNCAN AND OTHERS ARE ALREADY LAYING THE GROUND-
WORK TO SEIZE FULL CONTROL OF THE PNP MACHINERY (AND
THEREFORE INDIRECTLY THE GOVERNMENT) WHEN ALL PARTY
OFFICES WILL BE UP FOR GRABS AT THE ANNUAL PARTY
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CONFERENCE. HE SAID THAT THE PROSPECTS OF ACCOMPLISHING
THIS GOAL ARE "PROBABLY GOOD". THE RADICALS WILL BE
ABLE TO POINT TO THE ABSENCE OF MIRACLES AND THE CONTINUING

DECLINE IN THE ECONOMY (ESPECIALLY RISING PRICES, FOOD
SHORTAGES, AND INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT) AS EVIDENCE OF THE
FAILURE OF THE PRESENT MODERATE APPROACH. PERHAPS MORE

IMPORTANTLY, THE RADICALS HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED EFFECTIVE CONTROL OF THE GRASSROOTS MACHINERY OF THE PARTY AND MAY VERY WELL BE ABLE TO MANIPULATE THE VOTES AT THE CONFERENCE WITHOUT MUCH REFERENCE TO ISSUES.

2. ASKED WHETHER ARNOLD BERTRAM'S REPORTED "CONVERSION" FROM RADICALISM TO "MODERATION" WAS REAL OR OPPORTUNISTIC, BELL SAID THAT THE CONVERSION IS AN ONGOING PROCESS, BUT A "VERY REAL ONE". BERTRAM, "WHETHER YOU LIKE HIS POLITICS OR NOT, IS A HIGHLY PRINCIPLED, INTELLIGENT AND, WHEN NECESSARY, PRAGMATIC INDIVIDUAL". TWO THINGS HAVE HAPPENED IN RECENT MONTHS TO BRING ABOUT HIS CONVERSION. FIRSTLY, HE BECAME TIRED OF THE "THUGGERY AND OTHER UNDEMOCRATIC TACTICS" OF HIS RADICAL ASSOCIATES -- BUT ESPECIALLY THOSE OF MINISTER OF HOUSING SPAULDING AND OF NATIONAL MOBILIZATION MINISTER AND PARTY SECRETARY DUNCAN. THE REMA INCIDENT WAS A CRITICAL TURNING POINT IN THIS PARTICULAR PROCESS. SECONDLY, BERTRAM BEGAN TO TAKE A SERIOUS INTEREST IN ECONOMICS IN JANUARY OR FEBRUARY, HAS TALKED TO MANY PEOPLE, HAS READ MUCH, AND HAS BECOME CONVINCED OF THE WEAKNESSES OF THE RADICAL SOLUTIONS -- IF NOT OF THE STRENGTHS OF THE MODERATE COURSE. BERTRAM, BELL CONTINUED, OBVIOUSLY CONTINUES TO HAVE RADICAL SYMPATHIES BUT IS ESSENTIALLY A SOCIAL DEMOCRAT AND NOT A MARXIST. WE CAN EXPECT

FROM TIME TO TIME HE WILL SLIP AND THE JARGON AND ACTIONS OF OLD WILL SURFACE. BUT WE SHOULD NOT DISCOUNT THE IMPORTANCE AND DEGREE OF THE CHANGE.
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3. RELATED TO THE FOREGOING, BELL ALSO COMMENTED THAT HE WAS "AMAZED" AT THE DEGREE TO WHICH PM MANLEY HAD MOVED AWAY FROM HIS LEFT AND HAD PUT THEM UNDER "HEAVY MANNERS". HE WONDERED OUT LOUD HOW LONG THIS WOULD LAST GIVEN THE PHILOSOPHICAL INCLINATIONS POSSESSED BY MANLEY.

4. CONVERSION ENDED WHEN BELL HAD TO LEAVE FOR HIS CONSTITUENCY OFFICE WHERE HE WAS DUE FOR A MEETING WITH A NUMBER OF "PETITIONERS". HE ASKED CHARGE TO PROVIDE HIM TRANSPORTATION SO THAT LATTER COULD SEE FOR HIMSELF THE PROBLEMS HE (BELL) WOULD FACE ON ARRIVAL AT HIS OFFICE. HE SAID TO EXPECT AT LEAST 100 PEOPLE SEEKING EMPLOYMENT. ON ARRIVAL THERE WAS A CROWD OF 200 - 300 WHICH IMMEDIATELY SWALLOWED PD UP WITH DEMANDS FOR JOBS.
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